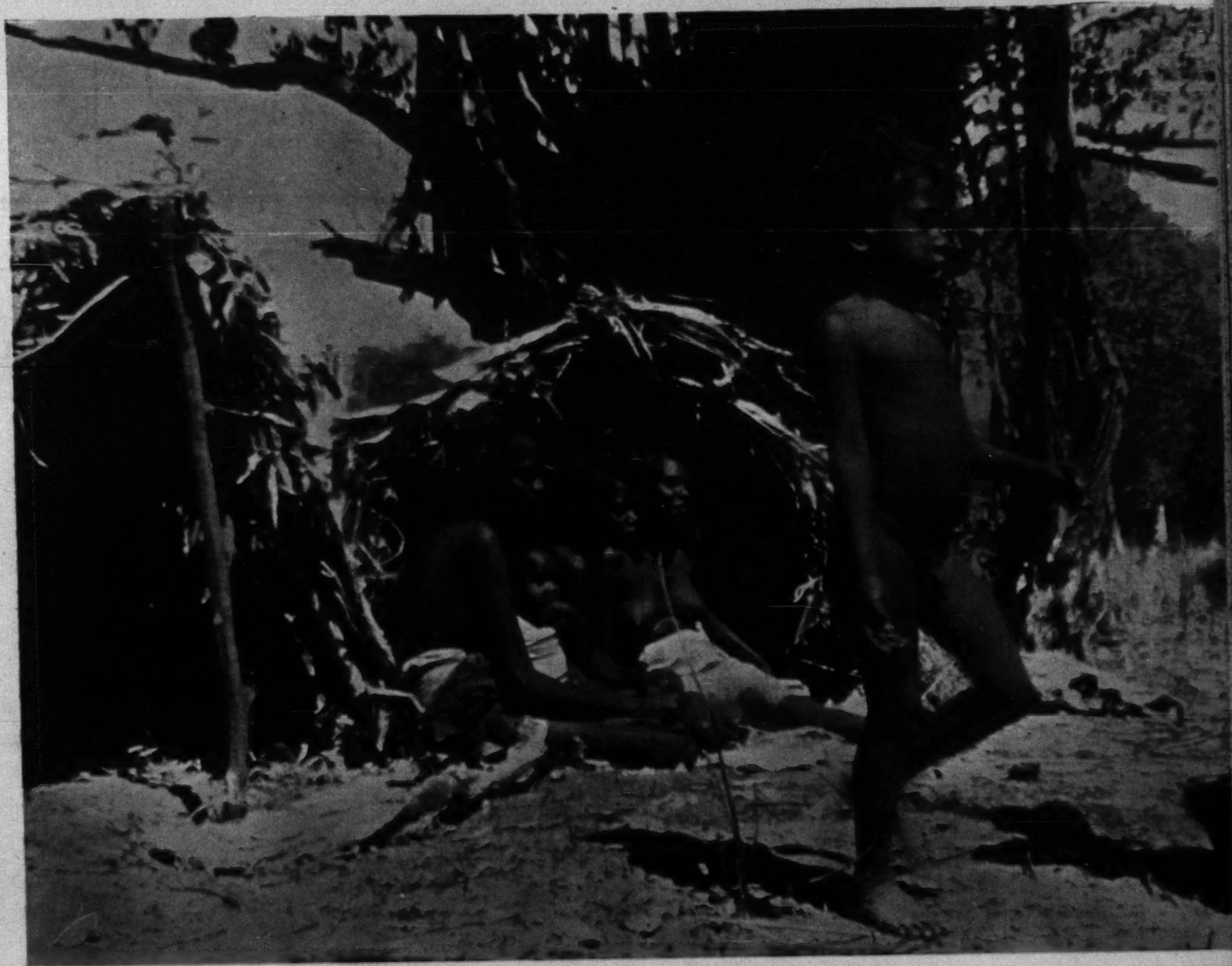


DOCUMENTARY *film*
news

INCORPORATING DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

JUNE 1948

ONE SHILLING



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DOCUMENTARY *film news*

VOL. 7 NO. 66 JUNE 1948

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CONTENTS

Editorial	61
Notes of the Month	62
Censorship—How?	63
Canada Goes to China	64, 65
Grant McLean	
New Documentary Films	66
Hamlet, Prince of Denmark	67
Stuart Legg	68
Donald Alexander	
Gregg Toland—Film-maker	69, 70
Lester Koenig	
Normandy Diary II	71
List of Makers of Film Strips	72

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DRAWING THE LINE

FOR many years, stage producers in this country have played an interesting little game known as Catching the Chamberlain. This consisted of submitting your play to the Lord Chamberlain and then amending it according to his stipulations while not losing any of your original themes. A musical comedy producer won an Oscar when he rewrote the line 'She sits among the cabbages and peas' as 'She sits among the cabbages and leeks'—and got away with it!

The screen producer has the same type of game with the British Board of Film Censors—this time it is known as Drawing the Line. The idea is that the Board draws the Line at something in your film and then it is up to you to alter the material you have shot to fit the Line. Alternatively, you can try to assess the Line before submitting the film. Whether you win or not is anybody's guess and may well depend on what kind of breakfast the Board had that morning.

The public isn't consulted—it takes what is left after the tug-of-war. In fact, except for things like *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, it doesn't usually know that there has been a fight.

If you want your film to be seen in America you must conform to the Motion Picture Production Code—you must Be Careful (with capitals) about twelve main headings. They are:

Crime, Sex, Vulgarity, Obscenity, Profanity, Costume, Dances, Religion, Locations, National Feelings, Titles, and Repellent subjects.

If you manage to make a film avoiding all the pitfalls under these headings and yet being worth seeing you will have made a real film; if you manage to do it more than once out of every fifty films you make you can count yourself head of the class.

But there's one comfort if your film is intended for Export Only—you know where to Draw the Line. Mind you, we're not going to say that the Line over there is in the right place—we wouldn't admit that for a moment—it just isn't. But if you employ an old man with a beard to sit in the corner of the set with a copy of the Motion Picture Code in one hand and a blue pencil in the other, you can be sure that your film will get by with the Legion of Decency. You can also be sure you have made a more than averagely bad and dreary film, but never mind about that.

Here in Britain, the Code is non-existent; like our Constitution it is unwritten. That is all to the good and should make the Board of Censors an enlightened body able and willing to judge every film on its own merits; the Board is, theoretically, able to realize that something quite out of place in a musical comedy may well be an integral part of a documentary—we're not yet quite sure that it does in fact avail itself of this power. We certainly have no proof.

The Board of Censors is elusive as the Pimpernel never was; it is anonymous. We hereby issue to its members an open invitation. We'd like to hear from them, we'd like to know their ideas about the job with which they are entrusted. We hope they will accept and we promise to let them retain their anonymity. Let them introduce themselves to the public in our columns.

The Board of Censors exist for the benefit of the public; it is there to safeguard the public morality. Isn't it about time that the public was allowed to take part in this game of Drawing the Line.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

UNDER the terms of the new Films Act separate quotas are to be fixed for British pictures to be shown as first features and for British second features and short films to be shown in the supporting programme. All makers of documentary and specialized films awaited with considerable anxiety the fixing of the figure for the supporting programme. The abandonment of second feature production at Highbury and Nettlefolds studios has re-emphasized the fact that the bulk of the British contribution to the supporting programme must come from those companies at present engaged on the production of documentary and specialized films.

These companies have recently carried out a survey of their production capacity which indicates that under proper marketing conditions they could contribute without difficulty 50 per cent of the footage required by British cinemas in terms of second features and shorts. The news that Mr Wilson had named instead a figure of 25 per cent was naturally received with great disappointment. There is no secret about his reasons. It is clear that he feels that the figure should be based largely on current output rather than upon the output which might result from an encouragingly high quota figure. He—like the production companies themselves—is worried by the poor marketing conditions which at present inhibit the supply of British second features and shorts.

The processes of Mr Wilson's logic are, however, challenged by many members of the industry, who argue that better marketing conditions can only follow the fixing of a high quota percentage and will never precede it. Certain it is that some bold action is called for from the Board of Trade if the present vicious circle of supply and demand is to be broken. It is probably true that the present output of the documentary and specialized companies cannot even contribute a 25 per cent quota in terms of theatrical second features and shorts (as distinct from non-theatrical products). But will their output ever equal their potential productive power unless a high quota figure is one day fixed?

In the meantime, it behoves all workers in documentary to see to it that the present opportunity which even the 25 per cent quota provides is not wasted. Very roughly, it means that in every cinema

programme in the country there could be on the average fifteen minutes of film emanating from the Cinderella companies of the industry. In the aggregate, it represents a considerable footage and it should stimulate a considerably higher output of documentary films of four to six reels than has yet been achieved.

Czechoslovakia

WE have just received a copy of the first number of a new publication *Czechoslovak Film*, a magazine published in English for the purpose of giving information about the activities of the State Film Industry to the English-speaking world. The paper gives news of films released and in production and we are very glad to see that more puppet films are promised this year—an especially interesting one should be that to be made in colour with the use of glass puppets. The glass figures are supposed to move more naturally than the ones made of wire and rubber which have been used up to now. There is also mention of the film *Krakatit* based on the novel of the same name by Karel Capek—we hope that this will reach England in the not too distant future. Altogether *Czechoslovak Film* is an interesting and useful publication and we could wish that many other countries would follow the example of the Czechoslovak film industry in sending us news of their activities.

American Film Magazines

A CLAUSE in Schedule A of the new Films Act gives the American film industry authority to use monies accruing in this country for 'payment arising from the acquisition and publication of periodicals relating to motion pictures'. Up to now none of the cinema publications in this country have been either whole or part financed by America. We feel that this clause is potentially dangerous and we wonder how it will affect the field of British film magazines. Many new ones have sprung up during and after the war years—some of the serious type and others of the purely 'fan' variety. Does this mean that the market will be glutted with 'glossy' papers designed to whet the appetite of the British public for more American films? The situation needs watching.



Rita Hayworth Gets By with the Censor

(see article opposite)

THE British Board of Censors has in the past months been in the news. As long as all goes well, nobody but the producers and the exhibitors are really aware of its existence. Then along comes a *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* and both national and trade Press burst out into exaltations or condemnations of its workings. And maybe the most surprising outcome of these occasional outbursts is the realization that the average cinema-goer—on whose behalf all the work of the Board is done—knows less than nothing about its history, composition or procedure. All he knows is that, before every film he sees in a cinema, he looks at a Censor's Certificate which grades the film about to be shown as A, U or H.

Why?

Film-making in this country was in its infancy early in this century. The public had not really got into the habit of going to the pictures, but people had already begun to realize that the film could become a dangerous weapon—that public morality must be safeguarded. The Good Old Days of Victorian prudery were not so very far away and it came about that those who make films with a hand-cranked camera and a lot of hope were mostly those go-ahead young men who had so far grown away from the manners of their nineteenth century papas as to be all too ready to flout convention.

The general public then had no idea (neither had the film-makers of those days) of the far-reaching effects of moving pictures in the future. They did not realize that what they regarded as a novel form of entertainment would come to be the most powerful teaching medium in the world—a medium which could reach all races, all ages, all creeds and could influence thousands of people for good or for ill. They did realize that here was something new and, therefore, suspect and over which there ought to be some way of exercising a control.

And so, in 1913, at the request of the cinema trade in general, the British Board of Film Censors was set up, and both exhibitors and producers felt happier because they could now go to the public and say, as it were, 'Here is a film for you to see. It has been passed by the Censor and it has a certificate showing that it will do no moral damage to you'. The Board was in effect their baby—maybe thirty-five years later the child is a trifle tiresome and often gets obstreperous, but the fact remains that producers and distributors held hands over the font at the christening in 1913.

How?

The Board, as now constituted, consists of President, Secretary, four examiners and two readers. The names of President (S. W. Harris) and Secretary (J. Brooke Wilkinson) are known to all, but the remaining six members preserve their anonymity with the most incredible care. A whole month of inquiry on the part of *DFN* editorial staff has failed to discover their names or (and this is much more important) their qualifications for the serious job with which they are entrusted. We are told that they are 'retired public servants and all highly educated' and that there is one woman. The Board is a voluntary organization; it is non-profit-making, its running expenses coming from a charge on footage of film viewed and paid by the producer of the film. There is a sliding scale for different types of film and here the docu-

mentary and instructional short come off better than the feature film. Producers are also invited to submit scripts before shooting starts and these are read and commented upon by the readers.

Every film is viewed by two of the four examiners and, in the event of their not agreeing on any particular point, the decision of the president is final. An interesting point to be noted here is that there is no law on the statute book which compels the producer to submit either his script or his film to the Board for its recommendations and amendments. On the other hand, every individual cinema has to have a licence from its local authority, and one of the causes in any such licence is that no film shall be shown in that cinema unless it has received the certificate of the Board of Censors. Therefore, unless the producer obtains his certificate, he will be unable to show his film to the general public. Sometimes the local authorities will go still farther and refuse to allow the exhibition of a film even after it has been passed by the Board.

The Board grades films into three wide categories—'U' films may be seen by everyone; children under the age of 16 may not attend an 'A' film unless taken to it by their parents or guardians; and nobody under the age of 16 may view any film which has an 'H' rating. The



why?

Censored

how?

Board itself admits that these categories are by no means ideal but claims that they are the only divisions which will safeguard the youth of the country while at the same time not imposing a too heavy restriction on the liberty of the citizen.

Such, in brief, is the evolution and construction of the British Board of Film Censors. It sounds excellent—it sounds as though it should work. And so it does, most of the time. But there are some peculiar lapses—a shot of an operation essential to the theme of some documentary may be deleted for no particular reason while a feature will get away with some good old rip-snorting sadism. On this month's cover we show a picture from a documentary which did not get by—the Board ordered 'delete shot of black boy showing sex'. The still on the opposite page was passed! We wonder how these two conclusions were reached, and what actuated the anonymous viewers in their decisions. We would suggest that there may be more danger in the attitude of Rita Hayworth than in the actual nudity of a small black boy.

What is the answer? Some form of control is obviously necessary and certainly desirable. We do not want to be bound by the rigid and tabulated Hays Code type of censorship—what then can be suggested as an alternative?

Canada Goes to China

by
Grant McLean

THE rain fell in a fine spray. Murky, low-hanging clouds almost obscured the S.S. *Rainbow* as she edged her way up the Woosung River, past miles of junks and sampans. The flat, treeless terrain stretching for miles on both sides of the river loomed unreal and uninviting. Anchoring in mid-stream the cargo nets of the *Rainbow* were slung over the side. They contained baggage marked 'Fragile', 'Handle with Care', 'Canadian Government Property'. A lonely figure alternately roared and pleaded with the deck-hands as he nervously followed the progress of the gear as it was stowed in a bouncing LCM, a dirty-grey assault craft now intent on water-taxi service in the harbour of Shanghai, China.

I was that lonely figure and my mind was busy unscrambling the reasons for my presence on this alien shore, surrounded by thirty pieces of luggage and equipment; and before I had time to organize my thoughts I was immersed in a sea of meaningless babble and surrounded by hundreds of milling Chinese dock labourers in the dusky segment of a cold March evening.

Nine Months' Venture

This one-man expedition to China was the result of combining the desire of UNRRA to obtain documentary film evidence of their work in China, and the willingness of the NFB of Canada to co-operate in this regard, having also a view to the value of new documentary material on China. An agreement was reached by John Grierson, the Canadian Government Film Commissioner, and Bill Wells, UNRRA's Films Division Chief. This agreement formed the basis of my China venture. I left New York on board the S.S. *Rainbow* on February 13th, 1946, and arrived in Shanghai on March 25th. It all seemed so simple and straightforward.

With a deep breath I plunged into the crowded streets circling my ten porters like a sheep dog. I left China much the same way nine months later. But a lot had happened in those nine months.

From the first I worked in close touch with Gerald McAllister, head of the UNRRA Public Information Section in Shanghai. McAllister won my immediate admiration by rescuing me from a native brothel where I was billeted, and offered to share his room with me at the Metropole Hotel. We formed an excellent working relationship, so that at no time did any friction arise in working out what stories to cover in the interests of UNRRA.

Distribution of Supplies

UNRRA had reached an agreement with the Chinese Government whereby one of the Government agencies, called CNRRA (Chinese Relief and Rehabilitation Administration), took over UNRRA supplies at the dockside and

handled their distribution in the interior of China. The now so well known inefficient and often corrupt distribution of supplies was one of UNRRA's major problems. It was the responsibility of UNRRA to see that its supplies were distributed honestly and without regard to political or religious creed. The fact that less than two per cent of the supplies reached Communist China is evidence of UNRRA's inability to adhere to their charter in this regard. The original basis of the Chinese operation, the UNRRA-CNRRA agreement, was palpably unworkable, and all the efforts of Kizer, Ray, La Guardia and Rooks failed to change the distribution pattern. However, some UNRRA supplies were reaching the interior. UNRRA's technicians had leaped into their huge tasks with energy and will; things were being accomplished and I set out to record that work and its effects on the country as a whole. It was necessary to shoot more than this actual delivery of supplies in order to get the meaning and significance of the story that UNRRA wanted. The decision on what stories to shoot and what should be the overall approach to my year's work in China was one of the more difficult problems which had to be faced immediately upon arrival. The situation in China was complicated by so many factors, and in many of its facets was so near anarchy, that UNRRA's instructions to me were hardly enough to go by.

Story Choice

I was compelled by circumstances to cover what stories I considered best, having in mind the general directions outlined by UNRRA. With the very real difficulties of transportation and communication, an error in judgment in this regard could have easily cost a month or more of my limited stay in the country. For example, if the Yellow River project had proved a failure—and it hung in the balance for many weeks—a great deal of my work in that area would have been in vain. In making decisions of this sort, reports from UNRRA field workers were of value; talking with men who had just returned from the interior proved even better, though a Ouija board probably would have worked well in conjunction with these other methods. At least I understand that this last method is impartial, and nothing else in China was!

Problems

Though finances had limited the size of the unit to one man, a two, or better, a three-man unit would have proved more effective. Too much time had to be spent making arrangements, and there was also the problem of having to spend so much time doing the little things necessary to staying alive.

Other production problems in China could be listed: as political, civil war, transportation, communication, heat, health, humidity, dust

GRANT McLEAN is nephew to Ross McLean, Films Commissioner of Canada. He has been with the Canadian National Film Board for about six years—is head of their Camera Department and ranks as Director/Cameraman.

and languages. One of the reasons for separating the political problems from those directly associated with the civil conflict is best illustrated by relating one of my experiences with a Government ministry. I was informed in an interview with a Government official that all footage had to be developed and censored before leaving the country. I dreaded the thought of having my rushes processed in China. What few machines they had were ancient and ill-kept, and the chemicals were years old, having been captured from the Japanese. I set out to convince the authorities that my status as a Canadian Government official and as a UN representative should place this footage outside of the normal rules and regulations. They suggested a compromise; they would have one of their men go with me and cover everything in 16 mm. This they would process and censor, with the understanding that we would censor the 35 mm. material in the same way. This would have been completely impractical and I thought it wise to ask for the same treatment that would be accorded a Chinese Government cameraman working in Canada. Several hours passed, a great deal of tea was consumed, but the point was won.

Travelling Around

Foreigners in China were required to have exit visas before leaving Shanghai for any other part of China. This added to the innumerable delays faced prior to each trip into the interior. The civil war made it difficult to pass easily between the Nationalist and Communist-held territories. The ebb and flow of the civil war made it uncertain from day to day who would be in control of the region I would be travelling in. I made two expeditions far into the Communist regions to cover specific stories on UNRRA's work. My flag-bedecked jeep was never turned back at a barricade, though cajolery and threats, so often necessary, were enough to get me into and, fortunately, out of a number of uncomfortable situations. The poor marksmanship and rusty rifles of the peasant-conscriptees combined to give comfort whenever boldness seemed the only way to get through. However, whenever a coup of this sort was necessary, I took great care to return via a different route. Some other UNRRA programme personnel units were not so lucky. No other cameraman had the good fortune to get to Yenian, then the Communist capital. For the first time, Mao Tse Tung was photographed in motion pictures.

Transport

The transportation problem was one to which there was no satisfactory answer. I used trains (the war constantly interrupted the normally poor service), planes (most unsafe, for the maintenance facilities were limited), boats (every-

thing from American LST's to sampans), donkeys and foot power. Once it was necessary to travel with my gear from the flooded section of the Yellow River to Chengchow by wheelbarrow. A jeep, given to me by a Chinese general at the Yellow River project, was one of my most valuable possessions. Carrying 525 gallons of gasoline about, I could travel about six hundred miles before refueling. The time allotted to travel, as related to shooting time, was of quite a different order than even, say, in Canada, where distances are at least as great, but where modern transportation facilities exist.

Heading the problems of communication came the difficulty of getting raw stock, shipping rushes to Canada, sending off reports and getting reports on rushes from Ottawa, and the difficulties of keeping in touch with the office in Shanghai while away in the interior. So far as camera reports were concerned, it really amounted to shooting blind, for it took about five weeks for rushes to get from Shanghai to Ottawa. As some of these shots had been taken five weeks earlier, it was nearly three months before any word could come through on them. There was no regular way in which rushes could be shipped. On each return to Shanghai, I would have to spend days finding someone going back to America who would take the exposed stock in his care. A wire ahead to the nearest Canadian consul or commercial attache to have him meet the boat or plane proved the best way to expedite the film to Ottawa. Every batch of rushes had its own story, but true to the American fable of life, they all ended happily and no footage went astray.

Health Difficulties

Health was certainly a problem. About fifteen injections, taken before going to China, promised to save me from all sorts of hideous diseases. Refresher shots had to be taken continually in order to get exit visas from Shanghai before each trip into the interior. Though I travelled through plague, malaria and cholera zones a great deal, only a few days were lost in hospital with a slight attack of malaria. Every conceivable form of dysentery plagued me, but I kept a large supply of sulpha-guanadine on hand and thus managed to keep ahead of the game.

The heat was troublesome, but more of a personal bother than a technical problem. I suffered a good bit from prickly heat; it was not an uncommon sight for the Chinese farmers, staring at my manoeuvres, to watch me leap into the air when a wave of prickly heat hit me—it was like being engulfed in a blanket of needles.

Dust and Language

I grew to hate the Yellow River dust. It was extremely fine and hard. The cameras, a Newman Sinclair (4 lens turret) and a turret Eyemo, had to be dismantled every night on the Yellow River project story, the parts and cases cleaned and reassembled. The Eyemo was easy to maintain as I had a complete set of spare parts for it. The Newman was more of a problem, though it did hold up remarkably well. On several occasions I had to machine parts for it to keep it in operation. Not trained in this field, I was fortunate that the parts which failed were easily made. Out of the 25,000 feet shot, about 1,000 feet was lost because of camera troubles.

The language problem was ever with me.



Grant McLean

I learned about a hundred words on the thirty-nine day voyage to China, and these certainly were useful. A good interpreter, however, was still essential to my work. My first interpreter was good on languages and dialects, but whenever a particularly arduous trip appeared in the offing, he took to bed with malaria. For this reason, I had to make one trip to Kaifeng in Honan province by myself. The problems in China were more complicated than they were, for example, among the Eskimos, where the needs of the interloper are simple and more easily expressed in sign language. On my third return to Shanghai, UNRRA assigned one of their translation-pool interpreters to me. He was fluent in English and French as well as in Mandarin, Shanghai and Cantonese dialects. He stayed with me for the rest of my time in China and proved invaluable. While the language problem never made it impossible to get a shot, it did slow everything up. It was vital when dealing with the curious Chinese peasant to learn the various dialects of Chinese which gave meaning to the phrase which combines the prayer and curse of a documentary cameraman—"Don't

look at the camera!"

The footage sent back from China was edited into eight newsreel stories which were shown throughout the theatrical circuits of America. A one-reel film, called *China's Need*, was produced by the National Film Board. It was widely distributed non-theatrically in conjunction with a drive for China relief funds.

The need for such films becomes more vital every day, so that the mass of people in each country may feel the problems facing the citizens of other countries and be able to relate their own problems with the rest of the world. The basis of our democratic freedom and progress is based on a high level of mass awareness. Documentary films can and must be the greatest factor in giving the impetus necessary for this development. I believe that the United Nations should have or sponsor such responsible documentary units in the interests of peace. National organizations, such as the National Film Board of Canada and the Crown film units in England, could work closely with such a programme. It is through this field, I believe, that the UN must move to achieve its objectives.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

How, What and Why? Made by *Basic* for G-B. Director: Kay Mander. Editor: Kitty Marshall. Animation: Cynthia Whitby. 20 mins. each.

THIS SERIES is a completely new departure for the G-B Children's Film Department and should prove a very useful addition to the programmes of the Saturday morning film clubs. The child perpetually asks the wilting adult, often just as ignorant, the how, what and why of everyday things. Presented simply and imaginatively popular science expositions can help to satisfy some of this eager curiosity. Children's encyclopaedias have already provided a partial answer; but one has to remember that only a small proportion of the child population has access to them. A film magazine shown at the Saturday morning clubs can have a very much wider coverage.

The first three issues of *How, What and Why?* have got off to a good start as far as the choice of items is concerned. Each issue contains three items of the following kind:

What makes a fire go out?
Why does the outside horse on a roundabout go faster than the inside one?
Why does a doctor feel your pulse?
How do railway signals work?
How do animals walk?

The chief limitation is in the way in which the material is presented. In one or two cases the explanation does not actually answer the question. *Why does a doctor feel your pulse?* is, in fact, an account of how blood circulates through the body. The intermittent action of a stirrup pump squirting water through a thin

rubber tube shows very well what is meant by pulsation. But no indication is given at the end of the significance of differences in the pulse rate with which the doctor is concerned. This kind of confusion could be avoided by more careful scripting. Again, in the item which shows why lock-gates are needed on canals, the explanation is perfectly lucid, but would have been helped a lot if the camera had been moved a little further away from the lock itself, enabling one to see the actual difference in the water levels, which is the key point to establish. Finally, if this series is going to hold the attention of child audiences under the exacting conditions of the Saturday morning clubs, more imagination is needed generally in the visual presentation. One cannot rely on the spoken

Why does a Doctor feel your Pulse?

commentary getting over more than a small part of the explanation.

The magazine is clearly up against a host of problems, but the service it can provide is an important one, and we look forward to seeing the progress made on succeeding issues.

Moving Millions—Crown Film Unit

Moving Millions deals with London Transport. It surveys the widespread activities of the machine that trundles millions of Londoners every day on their various occasions. In a style reminiscent of one of those popular versions of *White Papers* which, some civil servants imagine, grip the interest of the public like the fooling of Mr Danny Kaye, it gives all the facts and presents a perfect picture of an efficient, cheerful, punctual public service for the existence of which we should all be truly grateful. In this rather overcrowded vehicle, millions may be moved, but they will not include the members of the audience.

SIR: In the May issue your correspondent Mr Mervyn Reeves complains, quite rightly, that nobody really knows the effect of films in agricultural education.

We, who are so deeply engaged in this type of work, are only too much aware of this lack of knowledge.

We have now arranged for the Social Survey, the Government's own research organization, to do a field survey in the autumn and winter into the effect of a sample agricultural instructional film on agricultural audiences.

We hope to get answers to some at least of the questions Mr Reeves asks.

Yours faithfully,

RONALD TRITTON

Director, Films Division

What can the Elephant do with its Trunk?

The filming of Shakespeare is one of the most controversial issues in the world of cinema. It is one of those matters which set critics at each other's throats; nor is the field left to the professional critic—scholars, teachers, theatrical producers all come along to take a hand in the battle. We have watched the usual spate of printed matter which filled the papers after the exhibition of the long awaited film of 'Hamlet' and we have decided to go right outside the ordinary critics. The two reviews printed below are unusual—the first was written by Ted Cork (16 years) of Film Centre who had never read the play and did not know the story before seeing the film: the second is by a documentary technician.

Hamlet

Prince of Denmark

TO ONE so inexperienced as myself in the works of Shakespeare, this film holds many surprises. By far the most outstanding feature of this film is the amazing clearness of the Elizabethan English. Throughout the film, the blank verse of Shakespeare is extraordinarily easy to understand. The opening scene immediately creates a sense of evil and sinister plotting. The dramatic way in which Hamlet's father appears, seemingly suspended in mid-air adds to the eerie effect. The bleak halls and stairways of the castle provide an admirable setting for the revengeful Hamlet. The heavy dramatic incidents, however, are enlightened by extremely clever wit such as we never, or at least very rarely, hear from modern writers. The whole cast is brilliant throughout. Laurence Olivier's Hamlet is indeed a pleasure to see. His diction is polished and clear, and his acting is excellent. This, certainly, needs no further comment. The queen seemed a little young to be the mother of Hamlet, but despite this, her acting, especially in the scene where Hamlet kills Polonius, was extremely good.

Jean Simmons' Ophelia fairly establishes her a great young star. Although at first she seems out of her depth in Shakespeare she quickly recovers and the dramatic climax when the death of her father transforms her into a complete lunatic and she drowns herself is both saddening and brilliant. Felix Aylmer as Polonius gives us one of the greatest performances of his career. As the faithful counsellor of the king he is both tragic and amusing until he meets his death. From the beginning, the plotting of Hamlet to bring about the downfall of his uncle, the king, provides us with incident upon incident until in the last scene both Hamlet and the king are killed by each other's plots.

This film will be a great enlightenment to all those who have always regarded Shakespeare as too classical to enjoy, and must rank as one of the greatest of motion pictures ever to be produced and it is truly heartening to know that it is the result and the work of British technicians and actors.

TED CORK

FOR ONE who is not an authority upon Shakespeare to review *Hamlet* as a version of the play—particularly after once seeing—would seem an intolerable impertinence. But for a technician to air his views upon *Hamlet* as the work of a bunch of film technicians telling in their various media a simple story of a man's revenge

is perhaps just permissible. Almost everyone who sees the film will like it up to a point, and everyone will inevitably, and perhaps privately, make his own reservations. Technically, however, it is almost impossible to criticize. The camerawork is superb. The rather hard lighting and depth of focus appear somewhat strange in a British film, but they do give a bleakness and grandeur to the settings. The restless camera could so easily be irritating were it not for some of the most accurate operating I have ever seen. To my mind this is the technical triumph of the picture. It takes great skill to manoeuvre a camera through the tortuous paths of Furse's Elsinore, but never for a moment is there a trace of hesitance or indecision. The recording is beyond reproach—perhaps the finest dialogue recording we have had from Denmark; and if the voice of the Ghost may have rightly incurred the ridicule of some critics, let them suggest some better way of illustrating the ethereal. Roger Furse's sets and William Walton's music are all that for months we hoped

and knew they would be.

Why then is one's praise tempered by a tinge of doubt? Personally I feel it is because Olivier is not a Hamlet for whom one can have sympathy or understanding. He is cold and—dare one say it?—affected as only Olivier can be. Someone has said that the film is full of quotations. That is exactly what it is, probably because Olivier has not had someone in charge of the action who can temper his own personality. This is no story of a man who cannot make up his mind. Olivier knows his own mind only too well, and his mind is to convince us all by brute force more than anything else that his Hamlet is indeed the Lord thy Hamlet, and that thou shalt have no other Hamlet before him.

But this is no way to end. Here is a prestige film of brilliant merit in so many ways. It is a triumph of technical achievement and a very noble attempt. Millions of people all over the world will see the film of *Hamlet*, and who are we to blame them if they see it only once!

A TECHNICIAN



Polonius



At first sight, Stuart Legg is a sombre puritanical character, with a keen nose for detail, and, paradoxically, an aptitude for wearing primrose neckties. We remember with embarrassment our muffled rage when he took over the producership of Strand in 1937 (Rotha was at that time leaving for a year's session at the Museum of Modern Art in New York) and he promptly announced his intention of descending on our snug location in South Wales 'to help with our dialogue shooting'. (It was our first dialogue film, and he was only taking wise precautions, but what we expect from the old governor we do not always take from a new broom.) Within one hour of his arrival, he had made himself more helpful than any producer we have ever known, which helpfulness continued for the next three days, without Stuart ever apparently emerging from the background or visibly opening his mouth. When he got back he told his wife Margaret that he was greatly impressed with our capabilities as a director, and she dutifully passed on the information. Thereafter we would have died for him gladly—certainly we were prepared to work ourselves to death. Now, we too, produce—but that high level of skill or that low level of cunning we dare not hope to attain.

As a servant of documentary Stuart is prehistoric. He is first found in the Cambridge reminiscences of equivalent old-timers like Basil Wright and Humphrey Jennings, busily working away on *Power* (production: Cambridge Film Society), and developing a majestic social conscience. (Incidentally, he once accused us of being dominated by a social conscience; that's like Stuart's puritanical nature, to attribute to others the virtues he is too austere to claim for himself.) It is true he so far deviated from the stern line of duty as to meet his wife while he was still in *status pupillari*; but in fairness it must be recorded that Margaret Ames was a don's daughter.

After leaving Cambridge, Legg worked with Gaumont British Instructional from 1931-2; then he joined the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit and stayed on, after the GPO took over, until 1937. Next he was translated to Film Centre, and very soon afterwards to Strand, where he stayed till the summer of 1939. From then on he fits into the pattern of the develop-

ment of the National Film Board of Canada, first of all in Ottawa, and latterly in New York. His chief for so long, John Grierson, gives Legg maximum credit for the 'World in Action' series, which in international short films distribution ranks second only to the older 'March of Time'. Now there are rumours that he is coming back, and that is the second most heartening piece of news we have heard in a long time.

From the beginning Stuart Legg never made the pretty films, which hit the headlines and got the swagger box office bookings. Certainly he directed *BBC Voice of Britain*, and (with Anstey) *Under the City*, but his has mostly been the hard graft of contriving something out of nothing, of personally editing ramshackle material into presentable shape; of pulling whole series of films out of limbo, of pioneering difficult projects. The cutting-room and his office-desk have been the control points at which he has always been found with his coat off and his sleeves up, pushing out more product to the minute than any other film maker since D. W. Griffith. We remember *Wings Over the Empire*—probably the most thoughtful and moving of all the Strand Imperial Airways films, patched together out of all the bits and pieces discarded by the directors who had shot (or had shot for them) their private material for their private epics. We remember how through Legg the evolutionary plan which Julian Huxley was struggling to communicate to us stupid filmmakers suddenly began to illuminate the whole series of zoological films made at Strand, and how it reached fulfilment in Hawes' *Monkey into Man* and in Legg's own *Fingers and Thumbs*. We remember, too, how he sat down and wrote a treatment for an Economic Survey of Scotland, which country he had never visited, and how little that line was altered in the final *Wealth of a Nation* after we (who were indigenous anyway) had been for months on the spot reporting with a camera.

Working and living hard, harder than circumstances really require, seems always to have been Stuart and Margaret Legg's motto. But typically, some of the most memorable things about them are their contributions to the off-duty apocrypha of documentary. On a Friday night or a Saturday morning, out would come the old Rolls-Royce (yes, it was a Rolls-Royce; touring model, vintage 1924, picked up for £60), and we would trundle off from the workaway Legg domicile on Shooter's Hill to a clapboarded farm in Lamberhurst, Kent, from which Stuart fondly imagined he would some time be able to commute (poor Stuart, there was no commuting for him until he took out a season from New York to Ottawa). And very determinedly we would ride horses at Tenterden, or pace the back seat quarter deck of the Rolls down to the Elephant's Head at Hook Green, and stay watching cricket and playing darts and drinking vast quantities of beer for a

Stuart Legg

A Close-Up

by

Donald Alexander

long summer's evening. Once we took Legg on a ceremonial drive round Scotland, with Grierson and Wright acting as official cicerones to this country he had written up but never seen. We remember every roaring detail from the preliminary dinner at Rogano's Sea Food Restaurant to the formal visit to the Grierson ancestors in a churchyard beside Bannockburn, and Stuart's gloomy acceptance of the evolutionary plausibility of a hairy Highland Cow, contrasted with Grierson's rapturous and improbable claim never before to have encountered the species. That time we were stationed in Glasgow—at the Central Hotel—because Grierson insisted (probably rightly) that it was the only place to which important contacts could decently be invited. Stuart stuck it for one night; the next day we moved to a quiet pub in Bath Street where our joint social consciences were not offended by 'plain breakfast' (coffee and roll) at 2s. 6d., and where the beer was better. Our contacts still came to the Central; like them, we just called in.

SOUND AND THE DOCUMENTARY FILM

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PITMAN

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Gregg Toland, Film-Maker

by
LESTER KOENIG
Illustrated by
HARRY HORNER

LESTER KOENIG is a member of the Editorial Committee of the 'Screen Writer'—he was able to gain first-hand knowledge of Gregg Toland's camera technique during the production of 'The Best Years of Our Lives'



"If you study the faces about you, you will find they are not all the same color."

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, a leading European film man came to Hollywood, saw *Citizen Kane*, and told its cameraman, Gregg Toland, that he was 'the greatest cameraman in the world'.

'No,' said Gregg. 'That isn't so.'

'Really,' replied the European, 'who is better?'

Gregg named two cameramen, then added, 'I'm only third best.'

Gregg may not be the best, or even third best cameraman in the world. But it is true that he is universally acclaimed, and a great many people abroad consider him one of the great artists of the film.

Unlike other creative and talented people who come to Hollywood after coming to maturity and reputation in the theatre, literature, radio or related media, the growth of the cameraman because of the nature of their work, has been indigenous to Hollywood. For that reason, understanding a man like Gregg Toland, is to understand one of the strongest aspects of the complex Hollywood character. Gregg is what I call a film-maker, and a professional.

The start of the Toland career was not very spectacular. It began in 1919, when he was an office boy at the Fox Studios on Western Avenue. One day he looked up and saw a cameraman on a parallel, cranking away.

'I never forgot that sight,' Gregg said, somewhat embarrassed by his youthful romanticism. 'It seemed so glamorous and I made up my mind that's what I wanted to be.'

'Didn't you have any previous interest in photography? Boy turns hobby into paying proposition, and all that sort of thing?'

'No,' he said, 'I didn't have the faintest interest in photography. It just seemed exciting to sling a tripod over your shoulder, and it seemed mysterious to go into a dark room and load film.' He laughed. 'And besides, an office boy in those days made twelve dollars a week, and an assistant cameraman made eighteen.'

'Do you still feel being a cameraman is "exciting" and "mysterious"?' I asked.

'Yes, I do,' he said. He said it in a way that showed he knew it wasn't the sophisticated thing to admit. Gregg is not a naïve man, and he knows how ridiculous enthusiasm for your work can make you appear to your friends. Yet, the fact that Gregg can still feel this excitement and mystery gives him a decided ad-

vantage over some of his more jaded colleagues.

Gregg worked as an assistant cameraman for a good many years through the 'twenties, through the golden days of Hollywood's prosperity and madness, days when Tom Mix, William Farnum and Theda Bara were stars on the Fox lot. His first jobs were on two-reel Al St John comedies.

'By the way,' Gregg said, 'I'll tell you frankly I was a very good assistant. I made sixty dollars a week when the others were only making twenty-five or thirty. But I was worth it. I was proud of the camera. I used to stay on nights and polish it.'

Finally, in 1929, the hard work paid its dividend. Gregg left the assistant ranks and teamed with George Barnes to photograph his first picture, *The Trespasser*, starring Gloria Swanson, and directed by Edmund Goulding.

'We had twelve cameras shooting simultaneously to cover various set-ups, and we had two sound tracks going. In those days we didn't know how to cut sound, so we'd shoot the sound in one solid unit, and then cut the film from our twelve cameras to fit the track. Since all our cameras ran continuously, one some days we had 30,000 feet of rushes.'

The early, experimenting days of sound were the formative period for Gregg's technique. After *The Trespassers*, he did more pictures with George Barnes: *The Devil Dancer* starring Gilda Grey, and *The Rescue* starring Ronald Colman.

His first picture on his own was Eddie Cantor's *The Kid from Spain*, which Samuel Goldwyn produced in 1931. It was a musical and it was made before the days of the playback. Instead of the current practice of pre-recording a musical number and then photographing it to synchronize with the sound, the orchestra was recorded as it played on the set. Gregg had to keep two cameras going together. When one would move in for a close shot, the second would be moving back for a long shot.

The men who made pictures in those days had to be the inventors of their own technique. Today, Gregg feels we may have lost something, a stimulus to our creative thinking, because so much of the inventing has been done before. In the past, many brilliant things reached the screen because a technical problem had to be overcome by men of imagination who had no one to stand over them and say, 'You

can't do it that way, because this is the way we always do it.'

In a very real sense, as a partial list of his over forty films indicate, Gregg grew to maturity with the medium: *Tugboat Annie* (1933), *Roman Scandals* (1933), *Nana* (1934), *We Live Again* (1934), *Les Miserables* (1935), *Splendor* (1935), *Dark Angel* (1935), *These Three* (1936), *Beloved Enemy* (1936), *Dead End* (1937), *Kidnapped* (1938), *Intermezzo* (1939), *Wuthering Heights* (1939), *Long Voyage Home* (1940), *Grapes of Wrath* (1940), *Ball of Fire* (1941), *Citizen Kane* (1941), *The Little Foxes* (1941).

During the war Gregg served in the US Navy where he made films, in the Pacific, and later in South America. In 1945, he returned to the Goldwyn Studios, where he has been working almost consistently for over twenty years, to do *The Best Years of Our Lives*.

GREGG's value as a cameraman transcends the concrete aspects of his work in the films he has photographed. He is a highly articulate man, who has done a great deal of creative thinking about the function of a cameraman in the complicated series of personal and technical relationships which are necessary to the making of a film.

In trying to work out some standard of judging photographic quality, he found the conventional criteria inadequate. For example, the terms contrast, texture, balance and composition are used in judging the quality of photography. A scene is well photographed, supposedly, if the cameraman has been guided by accepted principles regarding these elements. It is customary to balance off the faces of various actors in a scene so that there are no jarring contrasts. However, if you study the faces about you, you will find they are not all the same colour. To be true to reality, the cameraman would have to recognize that, and accept it.

'Yet,' Gregg explained, 'in *The Best Years of Our Lives* when Fred Derry (Dana Andrews) comes home to his father (Roman Bohnen) and stepmother (Gladys George), I was criticized because I didn't eliminate the contrasts in the tone of the faces. It was done deliberately. I wanted to allow the audience to see the white, unhealthy appearing stepmother, the drink-flushed father, and the healthy young boy.'

(Continued overleaf)

GREGG TOLAND (contd.)

bardier. It seemed to me that helped tell the story.'

It is the story which matters most to Gregg. He has gone beyond the literal rules of camera grammar to use the written word as his point of departure. He feels motion picture photography can be judged good or bad only in its relation to helping tell the story.

Obviously, if the screenplay describes a plain girl, the cameraman isn't helping the story any if he makes a gorgeous glamour close-up. In Hollywood, studio policy usually results in the cameraman trying to make the plain heroine as glamorous as possible. It is just this kind of disregard for story values which concerns Gregg most in his thinking about standards of motion picture photography in Hollywood today.

Recently, a test of a young actor was made by one of Hollywood's leading directors with a reputation for brilliant camera effects. The actor was seated behind a table, seen in three-quarter profile. A man was seated in the foreground, asking him the usual 'personality' questions. The man was smoking a cigarette, and the cigarette smoke was artfully worked into the composition. It was a beautifully 'composed' shot, with only one drawback: because the actor was placed in the background of the shot, and because the smoke partially concealed him, the function of the test had been subverted, and a prominent director who was viewing the test with an eye to hiring the actor, commented, 'Very fine cigarette smoke. Now, if you bring me a shot where I can see the actor, I'll be able to tell whether or not we can use him.'

This is a crude criticism, and a fairly obvious example. Of course, one would say, you should be able to see the actor in a test. But how can you apply this functional, or utilitarian doctrine to scenes in a film? Do you mean all photography should be 'newsreel' in quality to be realistic?



Under ideal conditions the cameraman should work very closely with his director.

Gregg's own account of his approach to a few of his films may throw some light on the matter. Since each of the stories posed different problems, no set formula could be used. Gregg felt he had to study the script, discuss the story with the director, and evolve a separate style for each picture.

'*Wuthering Heights*,' he explained, 'was a soft picture, diffused with soft candle-lighting effects. I tried to make the love scenes beautiful in a romantic way. It was a love story, a story of escape and fantasy. So I tried to keep it that way photographically, and let the audience dream through a whirl of beautiful close-ups.'

'On the other hand, *Grapes of Wrath* had to be a sharp picture. It was a story of unhappy people, people of the earth, who had real problems and who suffered. So we made it very sharp. There wasn't any make-up used. The picture had some extreme effects in low key, but they were, I think, real. As I remember, the camera moved only once—a long travel shot through the sordid streets of a Hooverville. It was what the occupants of the car, after the long drive to a promised haven, were examining. Photography such as we had in *Wuthering Heights* could ruin a picture like *Grapes of Wrath* completely.'

'*Long Voyage Home* was a mood picture. Storywise ("storywise", significantly enough, is one of Gregg's favourite words), it was a series of compositions of the mood of the men aboard the ship. It was a story of what men felt rather than what they did. The camera never moved in that picture.'

'*Citizen Kane* was a great experiment. It was a story of Kane's personality, what he had done to other people, what his life meant. It was a psychological story, yet the external realities were very important. It required a still different kind of photography, an expansion of camera technique beyond the usual limitations. Many points of view had to be shown. We had to experiment because the scope of the story demanded it. *Kane's* photography would scarcely have suited *Wuthering Heights* or even *Grapes of Wrath*. We experimented in forced focus depth, in travel shots, in startling effects, and in full ceilinged sets.'

'*The Best Years of Our Lives* was another experiment. But in a different way. It was Wyler's first picture after the war and was my first black and white since the war. We talked at length about the story and decided it demanded simple, unaffected realism. Willy had been thinking a lot, too, during the war. He had seen a lot of candid photography and lots of scenes without a camera dolly or boom. He used to go overboard on movement, but he came back with, I think, a better perspective on what was and wasn't important. Anyway, Willy left me pretty much alone. While he rehearsed, I would try to find a method of shooting it. Usually he liked it. When he didn't, he was the boss and we did it

his way. However, at this point we understand each other pretty well and Willy knows that I will sacrifice photography and time if it means a better scene. I, in turn, know that he will listen to any suggestion. I think *Best Years* was well photographed because the photography helped to tell the story. It wasn't breathtaking. It would have been wrong to strive for effects. We were after simple reproduction of the scenes played without any chi-chi. The only time I held my breath was in the powder-room scene when I thought we might be getting arty and trying to prove how damn clever we were instead of playing a scene. But Willy was right. It worked for us. If I had to label the photographic style of the picture, I'd call it "honest".'

GREGG's working habits may be of interest since they run counter to so many established views about Hollywood's creators. While it is true that technical personnel on a production, and cameramen in particular, put in long and hard hours, it seemed to me, that as I observed Gregg during the production of *The Best Years of Our Lives*, that he and William Wyler, the director, worked harder than anyone else in Hollywood.

Under ideal working conditions, the cameraman should be included in the preparation of a picture. He should work very closely with his director. 'Unfortunately,' as Gregg pointed out, 'they don't in this business. The director may work for months on a story, but the cameraman is tossed a script a few days before shooting.' In *Best Years*, Gregg worked on the picture from its inception, getting each version of the screenplay, and the revised pages as they came from the writer, Robert E. Sherwood. This enabled Gregg to plan the production requirements, to scout locations and shoot photographic tests. But, in addition, it enabled him to familiarize himself with the story itself, so that he had a thorough 'storywise' understanding of each scene, of each character. With this background, and with constant discussions with Wyler, Gregg was able to use his technique in the best interests of the story as a whole.

During the writing of the script, I remember going out with Wyler and Gregg to look over the location for the exterior of Fred Derry's father's house. On our return to the studio, Gregg suggested that I take Sherwood out to see it, partly to see if it was what Sherwood had visualized, and partly to see if it would give him any ideas. A few days later, when Bob Sherwood and I went out and looked the place over, Bob said he was very glad he came because seeing the dilapidated exterior of the Derry home made him realize the audience would not have to be told very much specifically about Fred's background. One shot of the wretched exterior would give a very real feeling of what his life had been like before he came an officer in the Air Forces. Therefore, added exposition in dialogue would be superfluous.

Gregg is in an advantageous position for working with writers and directors, because as well as a cameraman, he is a key figure in the operation of the Samuel Goldwyn production set-up. He is under exclusive contract to Goldwyn, and works very closely with the production executives in all their planning. The average cameraman works by the picture, and consequently is not in a position to add efficiency to production. Other companies might well profit by Goldwyn's example of more closely

integrating their able and experienced cameramen with production planning.

In any discussion of the Toland style, the question of forced focus is bound to rise. At the time of *Citizen Kane*, it was quite extreme to see objects 18 inches and 200 feet from the camera simultaneously in focus. Now, of course, we take such shortcuts for granted. Carrying focus is obtained by use of fast film, stopping the lens down to a very small aperture, and a lighting key much hotter than that used conventionally. 'Forced focus,' Gregg explained, 'is not a trick, and should not be considered as such. It is an aid to directors, since it gives them more freedom in staging scenes. As Willy pointed out in his article in last February's *Screen Writer*, "I can have action and reaction in the same shot, without having to cut back and forth from individual shots of the characters. This makes for smooth continuity, an almost effortless flow of the scene, for much more interesting composition in each shot, and lets the spectator look from one to the other character at his own will, do his own cutting".'

'Beyond that,' Gregg said, 'it helps the audience see more, and consequently see more story.'

'What about your photography in the Navy? Do you think it had any effect on your style?'

'This is an odd thing to admit,' Gregg said, 'but I found many times when I didn't have all the Hollywood equipment at my elbow, that the results were superior. Why? They looked real. No haloes of back-lighting, and no soft flattering modelling. For example, in Honolulu I used to go into homes or business houses to do a short sequence. Through the windows I'd have an *f*.22 exposure. Inside, an *f*.3.5 exposure. I would go ahead, photograph for interior, and get an extremely over-exposed exterior. But it looked real. I suppose some place in between the extreme of such candid photography

and the extreme commercial front-office style, there must be a compromise point where we can make pictures with realism. I think there is a noticeable trend in that direction.'

(to be concluded)

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Normandy Diary second instalment

Tuesday

To Tilly via Caen. It was not too bad a road, provided we slowed down every time a car came the other way as the edge of the road is covered with frozen snow. Whenever a lorry comes in the opposite direction we slow down and stop. They are absolute brutes, these big lorry drivers.

Caen seems just as much in ruins as it did last year. We stopped for petrol—and a coffee with rum, a typical Normandy drink, which is most acceptable in this filthy weather.

When I asked the way to Tilly-sur-Seuilles I was told Tilly did not exist any more! When I explained to a peasant that we were supposed to show films there, he suggested we should try St Pierre, the neighbouring village.

Tilly is indeed destroyed. The cross-road marks the place where Tilly once stood.

M. C— received us and took us to lunch at the only hotel. Conversation with the different people we meet is always interesting and can be divided into two or three subjects—food, reconstruction (or the lack thereof), rising

prices, and conditions in the UK. I felt I should have taken last year's lecture on Post-war Problems with me, as everyone asked me about our problems and the solutions we proposed. It is surprising how little the average Frenchman knows about England. No one would believe me when I said England was a very poor country and had spent all her foreign assets during the war.

After lunch M. C— took us to the hut where we were to project our films. We pinned up a sheet, tested the equipment, blew the fuses (this invariably happens) and chose the films. The car got stuck in the mud and we had to throw gravel under the wheels. A Bren carrier would have been ideal for this tour or even a light tank.

Tilly was the centre of most bitter fighting. It is said to have been taken and retaken 23 times, but as M. C— explained, local people had no idea of the campaign as a whole. For this reason I showed *West of the Line*, a narrative of the Normandy campaign. *Coastal Village* and *V-1* were again shown at the beginning of the programme. *Plastics* was given last as it is in technicolor. Although the commentary is in English, it is quite easy to follow and was appreciated because few people know how plastics are made and the many uses to which they are put.

There were about 450 people in the hut. The heat was terrific and I had hardly any room to move because the projector was in the centre of the hall. A spot of bother with a print, too. It was old and worn. Shall have to mend it tomorrow.

Dr W— has put me up tonight. Central heating in the house! As I came up the stairs tonight to go to bed, I saw a cat on the stairs and stroked it. Imagine my horror when I found it was a stuffed animal. There is a peculiar smell in the house, must be stuffed cats.

(to be continued)

NEW BOOKS ON FILM

Composing for the Films. Hans Eisler. (Oxford University Press, New York, 1947.)

Three-quarters of this book has a purely regional significance. It is a bitter attack by a sadly disillusioned man on some of the methods of music-making in Hollywood—an attack which is too often doctrinaire and politically one-sided. A victim of the recent 'witch hunt', Hans Eisler, through the interest and intervention of musicians and artists throughout the world, has now been given permission to leave America and breathe the more congenial air of Europe. In Hollywood he was a fish out of water—a fish whose atonal scales glittered defiantly in the clam chowder of Hollywood mass production. A book so bitter is bound to be biased. Eisler makes little reference to the undoubtedly good musical scores that have appeared from time to time from the American studios and, save for one or two isolated references to Russian film scores, he ignores entirely the great contribution to the advance of film music that has been made in this country and countries outside the American orbit—or rather, outside his own orbit. This is understandable, a man with such strong views and, moreover;

whose musical god is Schonberg will have little patience with the less severe standards of the non-atonal school of thought. Nevertheless, Eisler's indictment of Hollywood musical methods and tastes makes interesting reading and, although it is difficult to believe that what he says is said without prejudice, it makes one rejoice in the freedom of action and thought that is the right of the composer in this country—the freedom to compose for films without the surrender of artistic integrity.

The final chapters of the book have a more general application and given an intelligent summary of the technical problems and possibilities facing the composer when dealing with the highly intricate medium of film music. Though many of Eisler's suggestions have long been the common practice of the best European film composers, it was important that these should be placed on record, particularly as the best-known book on the subject (that by Kurt London) has long been out-moded. It is all the more to be regretted that the issue is so frequently confused by the clouds of red dust arising from the resounding thwackings Eisler deals his hobby-

horse. To the impartial reader it is not wholly to be wondered at that the hobby-horse irritably assumed the accoutrements of a charger.

W. A.

Bette Davis. Peter Noble. (Skelton Robinson, 8s. 6d.)

The first half of this book relates the career of one of Hollywood's best actresses and bonniest fighters. Mr Noble's account is interesting, if never very profound, and he manages to avoid the mixture of adulation and personal chit-chat which makes up the usual film star biography. The writing, though is unduly repetitive and occasionally even slipshod. Miss Davis's own views of the necessary balance between type-casting and character-acting are worthy of note, while it is a surprise, now that critics are upbraiding British producers for over-working their players, to find that, in her first five years in Hollywood, Miss Davis made no fewer than thirty-two films.

The remainder of the book comprises a list of all the star's films, with cast-lists, main credits, and plot-summaries of the more notable ones, and a collection of thirty-five stills, well chosen but not so well reproduced.

FOR REFERENCE

Complete List of Film Strip Manufacturers**Army Kinema Corporation,**

Dover Street, London, W.

Distributors of film strips made for Army Educational Dept.

British Industrial Films Ltd,

177 The Vale, Acton, W.

Publishers of Unicorn Head film strips. Strips made for industrial sponsors. Teachers own material made up. Distributors for National Film Board of Canada.

British Instructional Films Ltd,

Mill Green Road, Mitcham, Surrey.

Publishers of educational film strips.

Cartoon Film Strip Company,

137 Hamilton Terrace, NW8.

Publishers of film strips for young children, for use at home and in junior schools.

Common Ground Ltd,

Sydney Place, SW7.

Publishers of educational film strips. Strips for industrial concerns.

Council of Industrial Design,

Tilbury House, Petty France.

Strips on Design for sale and hire.

Daily Mail Visual Aid Service,

Northcliffe House, EC4.

Publishers of educational film strips.

Dawn Trust Ltd,

The Studio, Aylesbury, Bucks.

Publishers of religious film strips.

Dufay Chromex Ltd,

P. & O. House, 14-16 Cockspur Street, SW1.

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Kayes Ltd,

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K Films,

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National Interest Picture Productions Ltd,

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Newton & Co Ltd,

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Pathe-BIF Ltd,

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Photo-Union Ltd,

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As before, the organizers have received enthusiastic support from the Governments and film organizations of many countries and, at this second Festival, numerous entries have been promised from sources not represented on the previous occasion.

Once again the Festival will present a unique opportunity of seeing the latest and most outstanding documentaries from all over the world. There will be seven major performances, at each of which a new feature documentary will be shown, together with short films in every style. Most of these films will have their first screening in this country, and some will have their world *premiere* at the Festival.

Many notable film personalities are expected to attend and some production companies are making arrangements to release members of their staffs during the period of the Festival.

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